

### *VA Initiative Aims to Ease Veterans' Transition into College Life*

**SCOTTSDALE** - U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell today announced that Arizona State University (ASU), along with three other four-year universities and two community colleges, will be added to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) VetSuccess on Campus pilot program.

"We have a responsibility to serve those who have bravely served us," Mitchell said. "As a former teacher, I know the value of a quality education. Together with the Post 9/11 GI Bill, the VetSuccess on Campus program will provide extraordinary education benefits for our veterans who sacrificed so much for our nation. I strongly believe that veterans have the potential to become our society's most productive, innovative and successful members -- and together, will create the next greatest generation."

The VetSuccess on Campus program helps ensure that veterans' health, educational and benefits needs are met as they make the transition from active-duty military service to college life. The program provides experienced VA vocational rehabilitation counselors and outreach coordinators from VA's Vet Centers to universities to assist with vocational testing and career, academic and readjustment counseling.

According to the VA, there are currently more than 388,000 veterans across the country who are enrolled and using GI Bill benefits. Approximately half-million veterans are eligible for benefits. So far over 1,700 veterans are using GI Bill benefits, with over 1,000 veterans using the Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits at ASU. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) received 108,344 enrollments from veterans applying to go to school this fall, and to date has paid veterans over \$2.1 billion in benefits.

In 2008, Congressman Mitchell teamed up with Senator Jim Webb of Virginia to introduce and then pass the Post-9/11 GI Bill to provide enhanced educational benefits to veterans with active duty service, including men and women serving in the National Guard and Reserves, on, or after, September 11 2001. President Bush signed the Webb-Mitchell GI Bill into law on June 30, 2008.

Since World War II, our nation has offered education benefits to returning veterans. Under the first GI Bill, passed in 1944, nearly 8 million veterans earned an education. Though Congress has passed other versions of the GI Bill since then, the value of the education benefit has declined. The Webb-Mitchell GI Bill is designed to cover more educational expenses for service members, including Guardsmen and Reservists, such as a living allowance, money for books and the ability to transfer unused educational benefits to spouses or children. Additionally, veterans would have up to 15 years after they leave active duty to use these benefits.

Specifically, under the legislation:

- Service members, including those returning from Iraq or Afghanistan, can receive up to 36 months of education benefits, including stipends for housing and books.
- Veterans have up to 15 years after they leave active duty to use their education benefits.
- Veterans have the ability to use their benefits for program fees, tuition, books and housing.
- Veterans are able to use the Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program, in which the federal government will match, dollar for dollar, any voluntary additional contributions to veterans from institutions whose tuition is more expensive than the maximum educational assistance provided under the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill.
- Benefits are applicable for vocational schools and other non-traditional post-secondary educational settings.

The bill also includes a Yellow Ribbon G.I. Bill Education Enhancement Program which assists eligible veterans in covering tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. As a part of the program, schools agree to cover up to 50 percent of the tuition that the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill does not cover. As August 4, 2010, the VA has approved approximately 3,200 Yellow Ribbon Program agreements with over 1,100 schools for the upcoming academic year, including Arizona State University.

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## **Mitchell Announces Expansion of 'VetSuccess on Campus' to Arizona State University**

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